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ABSTRACT

This report describes the development and implementation of a process-oriented teacher education model for undergraduates in the area of reading/language arts, which stresses understanding of decision making for the classroom teacher. The historical development of the project is discussed, including: (a) conceptualization during the first year, (b) development and implementation in a 9-hour block of reading/language arts methods on-campus during the second year of the project, and (c) operationalization and integration of the addition of 15 hours of student teaching to the 9-hour method block during the school year 1972-1973. The report also suggests the importance of developing teacher education programs in cooperation with classroom teachers and school administrators, developing within teacher trainees a strong theoretical framework on which to base their decisions, and providing new directions for teacher trainees in moving from theoretical positions to simulation to field work in a field setting providing exposure to many teachers at a variety of grade levels. In conclusion, this model suggests a trend for training teachers in adaptability, in decision making, and in close cooperation with public school personnel. An eight-item bibliography is included. (Author)

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PROJECT *RELATE*: OPERATIONALIZING A PROCESS APPROACH TO READING/LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER EDUCATION

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PROJECT RELATE: OPERATIONALIZING A PROCESS APPROACH TO READING/LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER EDUCATION

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Background

Project RELATE might be characterized as "An Effort Beyond Incrementalism"--a phrase which Dean David Clark of the College of Education at Indiana University used in 1971 to describe efforts which he saw as "the only way to move beyond the original blocks which have hampered so many attempts at reform in teacher education." Conceived by an interdisciplinary team and presented as an "April dream" by Dr. Leo Fay in a paper presented to IRA in Atlantic City (Fay, 1971), Project RELATE has been moving forward during the past two years--on campus during 1971-72; and in a field-based setting during this past school year (1972-73).

RELATE was precipitated into its abrupt adulthood by a mandate from the Indiana State Licensing Commission in 1969 requiring six hours of methods instruction in Reading. The mandate stemmed from concern lest classroom teachers not be adequately prepared to teach reading. When the six hour requirement was passed it was a real forward step toward fulfilling IRA standards for

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reading teachers. And since the Bloomington campus already had a four hour language requirement, it was decided to package nine hours of instruction in Reading/Language Arts together and thus incorporate both curricular dimensions in one offering.

Although an important and progressive step, the mandate did mean servicing at least 550 students in the Bloomington program alone. Lots more instructors. Lots more money. Projections for the project, therefore, were

- that it be of modular design,
- that it be largely self-instructional,
- that it lean heavily on multi-media support,
- that it be performance based, and
- that it be exportable.

These product goals have, gratifying enough, been fulfilled in RELATE -- with the exception of being largely self-instructional, but the demand of the progression of the units prohibits it from being largely self-instructional -- more of this later.

As to program goals, Dr. Fay itemized these as being

- a six-hour developmental and corrective reading package to be field-tested in the Fall of 1971,
- 11 modules to use in toto or as the users see fit, and
- revision and preparation for a second trial run.

During the second trial run it was projected that

- the program would be expanded to nine hours,
- provision would be made for an integrated Language Arts and Reading Program,

- one-third of the time would be spent in simulated experience and one third in direct experience with children, and
- special interest and need units would be developed.

At the time of these projections, it was envisioned that the entire program would be recycled twice prior to the development of other than prototype materials. Again, it is most encouraging to evaluate progress towards these goals and see that many have been realized even beyond projection. The reality of student presence in the Fall of 1971 was a great incentive to development! However, although most of the goals have been realized, the route has been somewhat different than that projected.

Development and Implementation

Rather than developing a developmental reading package first, and adding other aspects of language arts during the second trial, the RELATE curriculum has been, from the Fall of 1971, a totally integrated curriculum. Because of scheduling demands it was necessary to move directly into offering the nine-hour block rather than enjoying the luxury of a six-hour development phase, and then a three-hour addition during the second trial run. Likewise during the first year of actual implementation (academic year 1971-72) it was not feasible to provide one third of the time in direct experience with children. In 1972-73, however, the projected one third of student time in direct experience

with children was successfully implemented in a field-based setting in Bloomington, and simulated experiences made up another third of the RELATE student's experience. In addition, special interest and need units in language and children's literature have been developed to accompany the program.

Thus, although there have been some deviations in directions taken from those conceptualized, many of the original hopes for RELATE have been realized. The initial conceptualization efforts on the part of cross disciplinary curriculum teams, for example, resulted in a process model (see Figure 1) which has become central to RELATE development in the ensuing years. Although the developers were aware that the number of steps in the RELATE process could easily be altered, the directions in the process were agreed upon, and have remained solidly functional during the two years of implementation.

Another major development thrust made prior to the efforts of the present development team was the filming of 48 hours actual classroom experiences. These tapes have formed the backbone of the simulation experiences which have become such an important part of the RELATE model; a model which moves flexibly from theory to simulation to field experience at each step (unit) of the model.

Development Problems

From the perspective of the faculty developers: RELATE met, during its first two years of trial, problems similar to those

of other large development projects (American Institutes of Research, 1972):

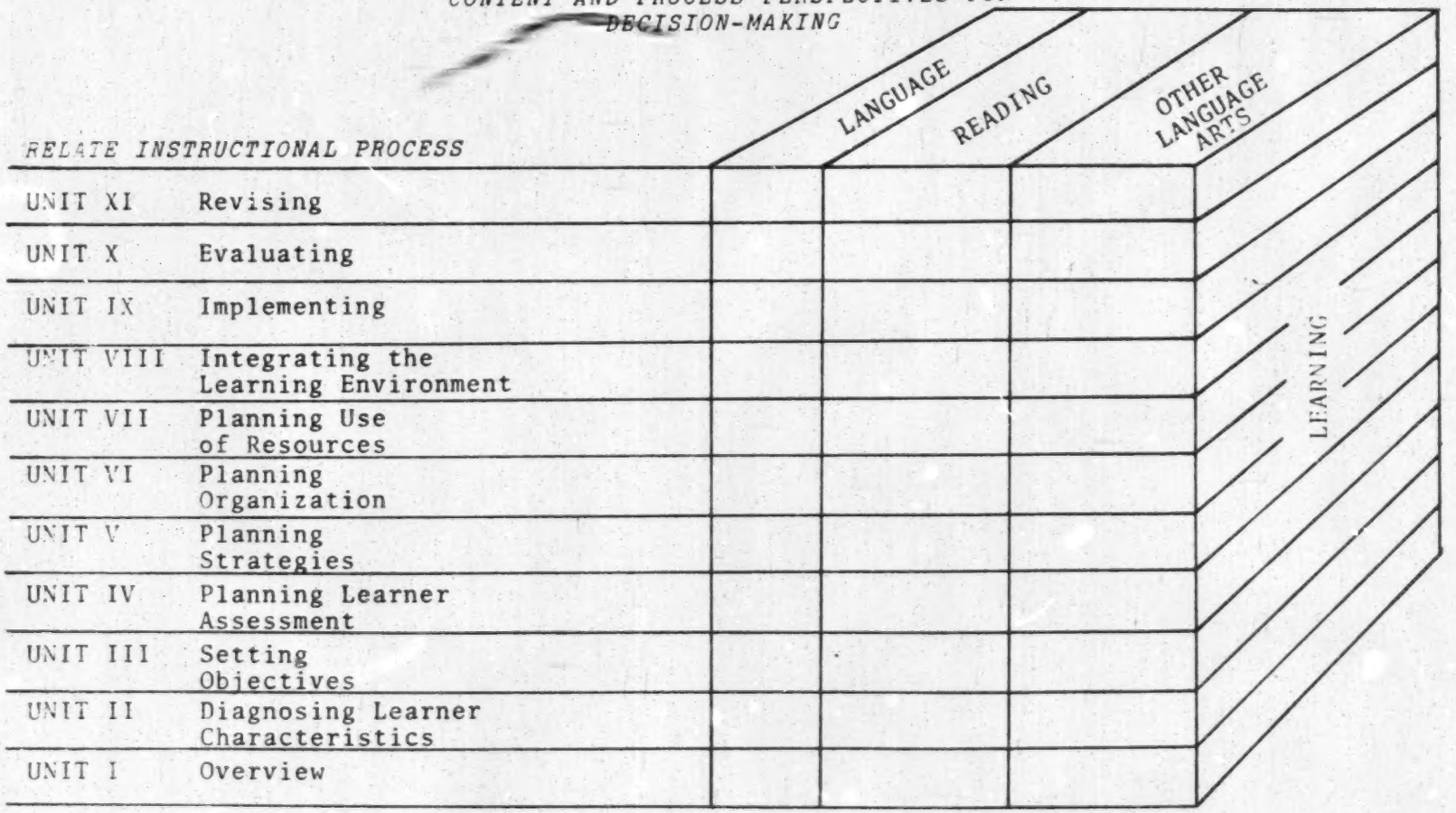
- how to articulate the goals of the program (it took almost six months to agree on the competencies to be included);
- how to synchronize the efforts of faculty from different disciplines;
- how to balance process and content concerns; and
- how to carve out the man hours to handle full teaching loads plus the needed development activities (drawing from the 48 hours of video-tape for use in simulation activities seemed in itself a mammouth undertaking).

From the student's perspectives there were other kinds of problems:

- how to adjust attitudes from non-committed participant in a required course to committed decision maker in a pivotal curriculum area;
- how to accommodate a major emphasis on processes rather than on subject content; and
- how to adjust from traditional textbook-to-examinations kinds of courses to a competency based program in which the student bears major responsibility for progress.

FIGURE 1

RELATE TEACHER EDUCATION MODEL



But even though the route was not without sharp turns and dangerous curves, RELATE survived. And during that first year was born the competencies statement which has given so much strength to the model as it has moved into field operation. Despite many revisions, the Competencies and Enablers Statement, as it has come to be known (RELATE, 1972), has focused the efforts of the development team, and has allowed major emphasis during the past school year (1972-73) to be placed upon evaluation of student competencies. When examining the useful and excellent summary of competency based programs prepared by Elam for AACTE (1971), the RELATE team was struck by how many of the characteristics of competency based programs actually typified Project RELATE. Thus, in addition to being dedicated to the development of teachers trained to think of themselves as decision makers, and decision makers within a carefully conceived process model, the RELATE team realized that it was fast becoming a bona fide performance-based program.

For example, The Manchester Interview (Andrews, 1972, p. 3) delineates nine aspects of competency based teacher education. If RELATE were to be rated as to its successful incorporation of each of these nine aspects, its ratings would probably appear as presented in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

HYPOTHETICAL RATING OF PROJECT RELATE ON MANCHESTER INTERVIEW CRITERIA FOR COMPETENCY BASED TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

	LOW	HIGH
1. Explicit Performance Criteria	*----*----*----✓*----*	
2. Personalization of Instruction	*----*----*----✓*----*	
3. Field Centered	*----*----*----*----✓*	
4. Feedback to Participants	*----*----*----*----✓*	
5. Emphasis on Exit Rather than on Entrance Criteria	*----*----*----*----✓*	
6. Achievement Rather than Time Base	*----*----*----*----✓*	
7. Modules Rather Than Courses	*----*----✓*----*----*	
8. Public Statement of Competencies	*----*----*----*----✓*	
9. Conceptualization of Role of Teacher	*----*----*----*----✓*	

Subsequent references to Project RELATE at professional meetings[1&2] and in personal correspondence[3] have indicated its successful thrust in this direction.

Implementation

Although the cohesiveness of the interdisciplinary development team (Dr. Roger Farr, Dr. Jerome Harste, Dr. Beverly Huntsman, Dr. Anabel Newman, Dr. Richard Stowe, Dr. James Walden) had been established during the year of on-campus implementation, it was the addition of the principal of the local elementary school (Dr. Gilbert Bushey) where RELATE was fieldbased (1972-73) which really provided the missing link for a successful field-based program. Dr. Bushey attended RELATE Staff Meetings, interpreted RELATE to classroom teachers, met with RELATE students

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[1]Weber, Will (University of Houston), Talk given to the Conference on Designing and Using Training Materials for Teacher Education, Bloomington, Indiana: National Center for the Development of Training Materials in Teacher Education, 1972.

[2]Farr, Roger and Turner, Richard, A Telethon on Competency-Based Teacher Education Emanating from Indiana University. Bloomington, Indiana: Department of Radio and Television, March 13, 1973.

[3]Ekwall, Eldon E. (University of Texas -- El Paso), personal correspondence, 1972.

for on-site class sessions, and generally smoothed RELATE's path as needed. Although other campus demands led to Dr. Walden's leaving the RELATE staff during the academic year 1972-73, the other staff members continued to mix and mesh the viewpoints of their respective disciplines weekly or more often.

The development of the manuals grew directly out of implementation of the RELATE curriculum with junior and senior elementary education majors at Indiana University. Their patience, good spirits, and significant contributions have been immense, and many of their personal efforts are included in the manuals. For many of these students, decision making in such a regularized setting was a new experience. They often remarked that they had to take so much initiative and responsibility for their own learning. "All of my previous courses have been read the book, take the exam, and that's it," remarked one student this spring.[1] "In RELATE I'm almost daily confronted with a new problem to solve." The development of these students as decision makers has been an exciting process to watch. Their frustrations in trying to cope with some of the implications of the RELATE model have been great, but generally their tenacity has been greater. In grappling with and solving problems with learners they have grown stronger in their

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[1]Credit is due to Fred S. Keller (1968) for implementation ideas drawn from his provocative article, "Goodbye Teacher."

own abilities. RELATE is structured as a spiraling curriculum. As the student visits each new step of the process he also revisits the previous steps. This means, for example, that even though he is introduced to the process of diagnosing learner characteristics in Unit II, by the time he gets to Unit V and is asked to devise strategies appropriate for implementing objectives with certain learners he is asked to take an even more sophisticated stance regarding diagnosis than be assumed in Unit II.

It is this spiraling aspect of the RELATE curriculum, referred to earlier in this paper -- p. 3, which demands the support of a faculty member's judgment with each advancing unit, and detracts from the possibility of RELATE's being largely self-instructional. For example, the student is asked in Unit I to develop a tentative statement or definition of his philosophy of Reading/Language Arts. In Unit II he is faced with the diagnosis of the characteristics of a group of learners; and in Unit III he is asked to establish long range goals and specific performance objectives which are consonant with his definition of Reading/Language Arts and which take into account the nature of the learners whom he has diagnosed. Evaluating whether this task has been successfully achieved demands an ability to weigh the student's definition, analyze the congruity between the objectives, definition, and learner characteristics, and suggest how and where to build in such congruity if it is

missing. By the time the student is presenting his plans for all eleven units there is a tremendous judgmental task facing whomever is evaluating the student's plans -- perhaps this kind of judgment can be delegated to students in some fashion in the future. To date, it has seemed absolutely vital to have an instructor willing to personalize comments to each student's needs.

Practically, the implementation of RELATE in a field-based setting was effected in one school, with ten classroom teachers, and thirty RELATE students. (Logistically, three students is probably too many to have in a room at a time. Most classroom teachers would opt for two in a similar trial in the future.) One of the goals for RELATE was to break away from the traditional situation in which a student teacher spends eight to sixteen weeks with one classroom teacher whether the mix is right or not. The student should have experience in several grade levels, and with a variety of classroom teachers. He should have the opportunity to test his own personality against differing grade and age levels. And he should have the opportunity to make these trials in an intern setting where support is given by both classroom teacher and university personnel. Such positions have guided the field implementation of RELATE. At each stage, ample exposure has been given to the theoretical idea being presented. Students have then tested their assimilation of the idea in a simulated setting, and finally, they have moved into the classroom to make the theory work for themselves.

No strict time limits have been set on the accomplishment of each task. After an initial trial if a student wanted to better his performance he was always offered that option.

Assessment was carried out at least once a week during the Fall semester. All work was carefully read by instructors, and response was as immediate as temporal demands would allow. Students learned early that their work was read, that precision and logic of presentation was important, and that they could better themselves if they had been confused on the first round. During the second semester much more emphasis was placed on fulfilling process demands. Had the learner diagnosis been adequately presented? Were the objectives appropriate to the learners? Had a plan of assessment been included which reliably assessed the mastery of objectives? Emphasis was given to the development of appropriate strategies, organizational procedures, and resources. Finally, the student was asked to demonstrate continually in his classroom involvement the successful integration of the process elements as he implemented his decisions with larger and larger groups of children.

We would not want to suggest that cumulative decision making always flows smoothly, or that it can always be performed with finesse. But as greater rapport developed between classroom teachers and the RELATE staff it became more possible to zero in on the aspects of RELATE student behavior which needed assistance. And at the same time new and positive team teaching efforts were developing in

the classrooms between RELATE students and regular classroom teachers. Once again, side effects were beginning to accrue which were proving extremely beneficial to students and teachers.

The argument has been advanced that all methods courses should be completed prior to student teaching. Most RELATE students from this year's experience have spoken strongly for the position that other methods courses which they are taking concurrently are more meaningful in the light of what they are doing in RELATE. They do not feel handicapped, since usually at least one of the RELATE classmates also assigned to a given classroom has had a given methods course and can assume initiative for goal setting. Rather they suggest that courses they take after this experience will be more relevant to them, and that they will be in a stronger position to integrate what they receive in other methods courses into a cohesive framework.

Although the participating classroom teachers have given unstintingly of their professional wisdom, a big problem RELATE has had to hurdle has been the traditional role of classroom teacher in relation to student teachers. In the first place, the RELATE process, though utilized by many an astute and creative classroom teacher intuitively, has not been presented with all its accouterments heretofore. Sometimes, just the vocabulary of process thinking has put a teacher off. But apart from accommodating the decision

making process itself, some teachers found it difficult to relinquish sole responsibility for the training of the student teacher -- even to the student, let along to a university professor! But as bonds of friendship, trust, and mutual effort were strengthened, the spheres united and many situations which seemed to have no solution in the Fall, derived novel and productive answers in the Spring. Weekly in-service meetings with teachers have been a must! Each week teacher decision making input has increased, and although probably only about half of the teachers feel a total commitment to the program at this time, all have probably contributed more to the development of their students as decision makers this year than in any previous student teaching involvement.

Summary

In conclusion, Project RELATE has worked during the past three years to produce a program in teacher education which can handle the curriculum needs of nine hours of Reading/Language Arts instruction, and, if appropriate to the local situation, fifteen hours of student teaching. It presents teaching as a decision making process and places the needs of the pupil as the primary focus. Students are moved from theory to simulation to actual practice in the model, assume progressively greater responsibility for their decision making, and plan pupil learning experiences carefully

with classroom teachers. The model stresses competency: provides explicit performance criteria; personalizes instruction; provides abundant feedback to participants, emphasizes exit rather than entrance criteria -- an achievement rather than a time base; provides a public statement of competencies; and stresses conceptualization of the role of the teacher as a primary element. It suggests a trend for training teachers as adaptable, logical decision makers, and demands close cooperation with a field-based setting for most ideal implementation.

We welcome your response!

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